

SECOND PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT  
U.S. Appln. No. 10/003,415

**REMARKS**

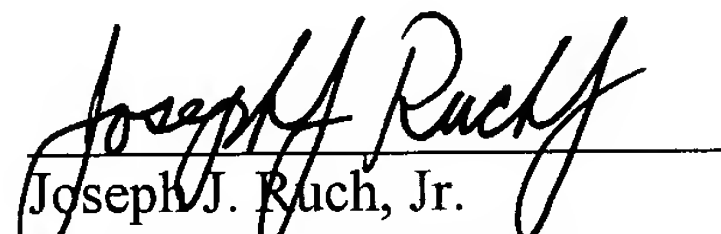
Further to the Preliminary Amendment filed December 6, 2001, page 5 of the specification and claim 14 have been amended herein to improve the grammatical clarity and place the application in appropriate form for examination. Thus the application is now in appropriate form, and the Examiner is respectfully requested to proceed with the examination.

Early favorable action is earnestly solicited.

In the event that the Examiner believes that it may facilitate the further prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the local Washington, D.C. telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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**APPENDIX**  
**VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE**

**IN THE SPECIFICATION:**

**The specification is changed as follows:**

**Page 5, second full paragraph:**

In accordance with the present invention, there is also provided a process for manufacturing a sheet material comprising the steps of:

~~Ejecting-ejecting~~ aggregates of fine short fibers having a fiber diameter of 4  $\mu$ m or less and a fiber length of 3 mm or less, or a group of the aggregates, and/or mechanically dividable fibers capable of generating fine short fibers having a fiber diameter of 4  $\mu$ m of less and a fiber length of 3 mm or less, or aggregates of the mechanically dividable fibers, together with powder materials, from a nozzle into a gas by an action of a compressed gas, to thereby divide the aggregates of the fine short fibers or the group thereof into the fine short fibers, and/or divide the mechanically dividable fibers or the aggregates thereof into the fine short fibers, and disperse the resulting fine short fibers and the powder materials;

collecting the dispersed fine short fibers and the powder materials to form a powder-containing fiber web; and affixing the powder materials, while forming a nonwoven fabric from the powders-containing fiber web, and at the same time bonding a layer free of the powder materials, to obtain the sheet material containing a powders-affixed nonwoven fabric.

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

**Please enter the following amended claim:**

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14. (twice amended) A process for manufacturing a sheet material comprising the steps of:

ejecting aggregates of fine short fibers having a fiber diameter of 4  $\mu\text{m}$  or less and a fiber length of 3 mm or less, or a group of the aggregates, and/or mechanically dividable fibers capable of generating fine short fibers having a fiber diameter of 4  $\mu\text{m}$  or less and a fiber length of 3 mm or less, or aggregates of the mechanically dividable fibers, together with powder materials, from a nozzle into a gas by an action of a compressed gas, to thereby divide the aggregates of the fine short fibers or the group thereof into the fine short fibers, and/or divide the mechanically dividable fibers or the aggregates thereof into the fine short fibers, and disperse the resulting fine short fibers and the powder materials;

collecting the dispersed fine short fibers and the powder materials to form a powders-containing fiber web; and affixing the powder materials, while forming a nonwoven fabric from the powders-containing fiber web, and at the same time bonding a layer free of the powder materials, to obtain the sheet material containing a powders-affixed nonwoven fabric.